

"It can't be!" said Garnet. "I'm sure a sword swallower would look, you know, different. Not so much like other people. Wilder."

"I bet it is though!" persisted Citronella. "Maybe she has to chew gum," she added, "to keep her jaws limber or something. In order to swallow swords."

They went back to take another peek but this time the woman noticed them, and though she smiled, she closed the tent flaps.

"I bet it's her all right." said Citronella excitedly. This was something to have seen, a real lady sword swallower darning socks just like anyone!

The merry-go-round looked wonderful. It was the kind that has only homes, not wild animals; but they were strange beautiful horses with flaring scarlet nostrils and broad grins. Garnet and Citronella each paid a nickel and got on. After a while the music commenced and the merry-go-round began turning. Up went the horses, high, swooping in the air as they glided, and then down like winged horses following the wind.

"I'm kind of old for this," remarked Citronella, who was eleven. "But I still Like it."

"I'm never going to be too old for it," said Garnet. "All my life whenever I see a merry-go-round I'm going to ride on it, and when I have children I'm going to ride with them."

They had two more rides and then they got off, and continued their exploring. They got some popcorn, too, and then they had a ride on the whip-cars. It was perfect. Their necks were nearly snapped in half, and all the little bones in their spinal columns kept feeling as if they were flying apart and then settling back in place again like something in a movie of Mickey Mouse.

"Oh, gee! " squealed Citronella as they rounded a curve

with a particularly terrifying wallop; "Isn't this awful?"

"But fun!" squealed Garnet in reply, and clutched Citronella as they rounded another curve.

They got off feeling very light and peculiar in their feet and rather whirly in their heads, and they went straight to a hot dog stand where they each bought and ate two hot dogs and a bottle of root beer.

"How about the Ferris wheel, now?" enquired Garnet, ready for anything.

"Let's wait a little bit," urged Citronella in a careful voice. She looked rather green around the mouth.

"I don't feel so good," she said.

"Just don't think about it and you'll be all right," advised Garnet airily, not having a stomach ache herself.

They decided to go and see the cooking and needle-work exhibits in the big barn like building at the far end of the fair. Hundreds of people had arrived by this time and Garnet caught a glimpse of her mother and Mrs. Hauser with Donald and Hugo.

"Don't say anything about feeling sick," Garnet cautioned Citronella. "They might think you should go home!"

"I feel better now, anyway," said Citronella, breathing a great sigh of relief. It was wonderful to know that she wasn't going to be sick after all; the fair took on a new color and beauty because of it.

"Oh I feel swell!" she cried joyously and gave a sudden skip.

They went into the barn like building and looked at everything. There were hundreds of jars of jelly and pickles on the shelves, there were cut flowers in vases and growing plants in pots. In one of the glass cases there were dozens of different kinds of cake; golden cake, and marble, and fruit cake and orange; angel food and devil food and sponge! Each had a little card beside

it with the name of the lady who'd made it.

"Oh, how delicious they look," moaned Garnet.

"Oh how my mouth is watering!"

"Mine isn't," said Citronella. "I still don't feel so good when I look at those cakes."

So they went on to the needlework section. Here they saw rag rugs and braid, and hook rugs, and baby clothes, and children's clothes, and crocheted afghans, and quilts, and sofa cushions embroidered with flowers and big dog's heads and other beautiful things.

Garnet heard someone say, "Why there's that little hitchhiker we picked up over to Esau's Valley!"

She turned around, and sure enough, there was Mrs. Zangl in a big Lavender dress and a hat with a rose on it; and behind her with his hand on her shoulder stood Mr. Zangl, that nice, nice man. Garnet was glad to see them. They shook hands all around and said what a fine fair it was, and Citronella was introduced.

"Are you exhibiting a quilt today?" Garnet asked Mrs. Zangl.

"Look at that," said Mr. Zangl, waving his out-stretched hand towards a quilt hanging on the wall. "Just take a good look at that. See what the judges thought of it."

Garnet looked at Mrs. Zangl's quilt; so did Citronella. It was every color in the world almost; all made of patches put together like flowers in a garden. It was the gayest, most brilliant coverlet you could ever hope to sleep under. There was a big blue ribbon pinned to the card with Mrs. Zangl's name on it.

"Beautiful!" said Garnet.

"Just beautiful!" said Citronella.

"Just the colors alone would. keep you warm," said Garnet.

Mrs. Zangl's gold tooth glittered.

"It's real nice of you to say so," she smiled. "I always did like plenty of color. My, I felt bad when I got too fleshy to wear red dresses! I guess I take it out of my system by making my quilts so bright and all."

"How about ice-cream cones for you three girls?" asked Mr. Zangl heartily.

"Well--" said Garnet looking at Citronella -

"Well--" said Citronella looking at Garnet. "I don't believe just one more would hurt me if I ate it real slow. I feel fine now," she added in a whisper.

So they all had ice-cream cones. And Citronella ate every crumb of hers; she was entirely cured.

Then they thanked Mr. and Mrs. Zangl and promised to come and call if they ever came over to Deepwater; and Mr. Zangl said that he would come and take a look at Timmy later on.

As the two girls walked back among the tents and sideshows they noticed some people coming out of the one belonging to Zara, the Jungle Dancer (persons under 16 not admitted). Among them was a boy. It was Eric.

"Well!" said Garnet going up to him and hooking onto his arm so he couldn't get away.

"Yes, wed" echoed Citronella.

"When did you have your sixteenth birthday, Eric darling!" mocked Garnet.

"Maybe he can't read yet." taunted Citronella. "Maybe he's too young!"

Eric was unruffled. He just grinned and licked the long black licorice stick he was carrying.

"Oh I just took a big breath and stretched myself up and out. Then I looked straight ahead and gave my money to the man in that pulpit-thing and in I went. Anyway lots of kids are young looking for their age."

"Yes, but Eric, what was inside?" asked Garnet

prancing along beside him.

"Something scary, I bet," said Citronella hopefully.

"Aw, it wasn't worth ten cents at all," said Eric disappointingly. "It was just kind of a stout lady in a grass skirt. She had long hair and a lot of bracelets, and she did a sort of dance. You know, like this -- " He tried, with much wiggling, to imitate the jungle dancer. Garnet and Citronella were delighted.

They walked on looking at things and talking. Suddenly Eric began to laugh at something he was remembering.

"You know what?" said he. "That lady, that Zara, the jungle dancer; she had a pair of glasses on, the kind that pinch to the bridge of your nose; she must have forgotten to take 'em off. Did she ever look funny!"

They found Mrs. Linden and Donald sitting in the shade of one of the tents. They looked exhausted.

"Donald's been on everything he could ride on in this whole fair," said Mrs. Linden. "All except the whip cars and the Ferris wheel, and I won't let him go on those."

"Ponies -- " bragged Donald, "I rode on real live ponies around a ring, and I was on the big merry-go-round and the little merry-go-round and that thing like a train." He looked at his mother. "But I want to go on the whip cars, and I want to go on the Ferris wheel."

"No," said Mrs. Linden automatically. She had been saying it for hours about those two particular things.

"Come with me, Donald," said Eric, "we'll go and see the little pigs, and the fine horses, and maybe we can find a balloon for you, someplace." He took Donald's hand and led him away.

"I don't know how we ever got along without Eric," sighed Mrs. Linden fanning herself with her pocket-

book.

"Where are Jay and father?" asked Garnet.

"Your father's still looking at the farm machinery," Mr. Linden said, "and Jay's been in the shies throwing tennis balls at china teapots for hours."

Mrs. Hauser came towards them puffing like a locomotive.

She was very hot; there were dew drops on her upper lip and her big nice face was the color of the rising sun. Under her arm she carried two huge pink Kewpie dolls; one with a red ballet skirt and one with green.

"I won 'em," said Mrs. Hauser, grunting as she let herself carefully and gradually sink to the e[round. "One at the coconut shy and one at the weight-lifting thing. You'd think they'd have better prizes than Kewpie dolls! Garnet, you can have the green one, and Citronella can keep the red. My, how my arches pain me."

"It's almost time for the stock judging, Garnet," warned Mrs. Linden, "you have about a half an hour."

"I know what let's do, we just have tune," said Garnet. "How do you feel about the Ferris wheel now, Citronella?"

"I feel fine about it now," said Citronella.

So they went to the Little booth by the Ferris wheel and paid their money, and when it stopped they got on and sat side by side in a little hanging seat with a bar in front to keep them from falling out.

The operator pulled a big lever and the wheel gave a lurch and a creak, and up they went backwards, with the earth and the fair dropping away from them like a vanishing world. It was rather terrifying but exciting too. When they came to the top they could see the tents and surrounding fields and houses of New Conniston all spread out and flat and strange. And then they

went down again tile going over Niagara Falls in a barrel, and then up again Like being shot out of a gun.

The third time around just as they reached the top the wheel stopped, and all the little suspended seats rocked to and fro sickeningly.

"They're just letting some more people on probably," said Citronella reassuringly, and they leaned over the bar and looked down, down. But nobody was getting on. They saw the operator's bent-over back below them. He pulled the lever and the wheel gave a quiver but didn't move. They watched him jerk the lever back and forth angrily, push his hat to the back of his head and wipe his forehead. Then he looked up.

"Nothing to worry about, folks," he called, "just a temporary delay."

"He means it's stuck," groaned Citronella. "Oh, gee!"

"And it's almost time for Timmy and the judges, Oh dear!" said Garnet.

Looking down like that gave you an awful feeling. Garnet held onto the side of the seat and raised her eyes. Below and on all sides lay the fair, whirling and jingling and unconcerned. She had never seen a ladder high enough to reach to the top of the Ferris wheel. It made her feel queer to think of that.

"We get stuck in the worst places," grumbled Citronella, "libraries and Ferris wheels"

"Oh, well they'll get it fixed soon," said Garnet hopefully.

But the Ferris wheel was stuck for more than half an hour.

There they were at the top of the world, or so it felt, and nothing could be done. The sun beat down unmercifully, and now and then the cool, wide September air moved about them like cold currents at the

bottom of a stream.

"There's Jay," said Citronella.

And sure enough, looking small and unimportant down there on the ground, stood Jay with his hands cupped to his mouth.

"Hey!" he yelled. "it's three o'clock! Hurry up!" They could barely hear him but guessed at his meaning when he pointed repeatedly at the watch in his hand.

"Maybe he thinks we should just spread our wings and fly," said Citronella acidly. She was thirsty.

Jay stared up at them helplessly, and then went over to talk to the operator of the wheel. After he had spoken with him he looked up at the girls again and hunched his shoulders. "Nothing doing yet awhile," he shouted. "Well send your dinner up by carrier pigeons." Then he laughed heartily and went away. He walked fast with his legs opening and shutting like a pair of scissors. Lucky Jay, thought Garnet. Lucky Jay, with two legs walking firmly on the firm earth.

"Awful funny, isn't he?" said Citronella sulkily.

"Oh, we'll be down soon, don't you worry," comforted Garnet. She looked about her at the people in the other seats. In back of them was a man all by himself, reading a newspaper which he had thoughtfully provided. And in front a man and a girl were writing notes on bits of paper and tossing them down to friends below, amid screams of laughter. Nobody seemed worried.

Just then the wheel shuddered and moved forward. Everyone had had enough of it by this time, and Garnet and Citronella had to wait while it stopped five times to let the people off who were ahead of them.

"Hurry!" commanded Garnet grabbing Citronella by the hand and running, "we've got to get to Timmy!"

"Oh land!" groaned Citronella, loping along and

whacking into people. "I'm just about dying for a drink of water!"

"Afterwards," promised Garnet, "barrels of water afterwards. Come on, do hurry!"

But when they got to the track crossing there was a bar in front of the gate and an important looking guard beside it.

"Take it easy, now," he said to the girls as they pushed their way through the crowd to the rail. "There's a race going on. You'll have to wait till it's over."

Dust rose from the track as horses trotted past; sunlight glittered on the spokes of wheels.

"I never knew a race to be so slow!" complained Garnet, hopping up and down and wringing her hands. "Oh dear, I can't bear it."

"Never mind," said Citronella. It was her turn to be comforting. "I'm real glad of a rest, we'll get there pretty soon."

Finally it was over. The guard lifted the bar and they went through. They never knew what horse won the race, nor did they care. They were running a kind of race themselves.

They dashed into the pavilion and Garnet pushed her way past people to Mr. Freebody whom she saw standing by Timmy's pen.

"Are we too late?" she gasped almost in tears.

Mr. Freebody motioned with his broad hand towards Timmy's card above the pen.

"The judges have been and went," he said solemnly.

"Oh dear -- !" began Garnet, and then she saw what he was pointing at. A blue ribbon it was. A blue ribbon! Pinned to Timmy's card.

"Oh," said Garnet, for a moment speechless. Then she began leaping up and down. "Oh wonderful!" she shouted. "Oh, Mr. Freebody, how wonderful!" And she

climbed right over the railing into Timmy's pen and gave him a good squeeze around the middle.

"Darling Timmy, aren't you proud of yourself?" she said. Timmy let out a stifled grunt.

"He's got his vanity same's the rest of us," commented Mr. Freebody Leaning his arms on the railing. "Don't you go spoiling him now, or you'll have one of them temperamental hogs on your hands. He's had plenty of attention for one day, come on out of that pen and let's all go and celebrate."

Garnet climbed reluctantly over the railing. Timmy didn't care; he lay down comfortably on his side with his hoofs crossed, sighed deeply, and fell asleep.

Mr. and Mrs. Linden came towards them through the crowd, they had been searching everywhere for Garnet. Behind them came Mrs. Hauser. She had two balloons, one shaped like Mickey Mouse and one shaped like a Zeppelin. She also carried a cut glass bowl and half a dozen wax fruit to put into it which she had won in a binge game.

"Did you see what happened to Timmy?" cried Garnet hurting herself upon her parents.

"We were there when the judges came, darling," replied her mother. "We watched him being shown."

"My goodness," said Garnet abruptly. "Who did show him?" She hadn't thought of that before.

"Who do you think?" said someone behind her giving one of her pigtails a jerk. Garnet didn't need to turn around to know who it was. Of course it was Mr. Freebody again. Naturally.

"Oh dear," said Garnet, "Poor Mr. Freebody, always saving my life."

Mr. Freebody laughed.

"Well you couldn't help it this time," he comforted her. "I saw you settin' up there in that little basket with

Citronella, and I says to myself, we'll just have to do without her. I said so to the little hog too, and he told me 'Okay.' "

"You've done a fine job with Timmy," said her father putting his arm around her shoulders, "maybe you'll Brow up to be the farmer in this family. Jay doesn't seem to have much taste for it, and I think Donald's going to be a G-man."

"Wow about Eric?" asked Garnet.

"Eric may not want to stay with us always," answered her father.

"But I wish he would."

"I do too," agreed Garnet. Eric was part of the family now, a brother. It would be awful if he ever left.

"There he is now," said her father.

Eric had Donald on his shoulders, and Hugo Hauser at his side. Donald had a balloon and a tin hem, and Hugo had a bag of peanuts and a flag. They all looked dirty but pleased.

Garnet told Eric about Timmy and he had to go and see the blue ribbon for himself.

"Do they have prizes for hens?" he enquired. "Next year I think I'll show Brunnhilde!"

"Where's Jay?" asked Garnet. Where was Jay? She did want him to see Timmy in all his glory. She couldn't enjoy her triumph fully without him.

"Well doggone if I didn't almost forget," said Mr. Freebody suddenly. "Here it is Garnet." He fished in his pocket, "your prize money. Three brand new dollar bills and a fifty cent piece."

Garnet was dazzled by such wealth. She folded the crisp bills thoughtfully and put them into her pocket-book.

"Whatever will you do with it all?" asked Citronella rather enviously.

"First," said Garnet, "I will have a party. Tonight I'm going to buy everybody's supper. And after that - well, I haven't decided."

But she thought to herself: I will just keep it for a while, sometime I'll want it for something really important. Maybe at Christmas time; or maybe the next time I find bills in the mailbox. Or I wonder how much a second-hand accordion would cost?

"I'm going to look for day," Garnet told her family and her friends, and slipped out of the shed into the mellowing sunlight of the late afternoon.

She almost bumped into him a few minutes later; he had a box under his arm and was hurrying.

"Jay!" said Garnet. "Timmy got first prize!"

"I know," said Jay. "I saw him get it. Look, I won something for you. A present, because of Timmy."

Oh day was wonderful, Garnet thought, ripping the string and paper from the box with eager fingers. She decided definitely to find out about accordions as soon as possible. She opened the box.

There, resting elegantly on a watermelon-pink rayon lining were a comb, brush and looking glass all made of pearly lavender stuff. Garnet was overwhelmed by their beauty.

"Oh Jay!" she said. It was all she could say.

"Okay, forget it," said day in embarrassment. "I just thought you could use 'em. Come on, let's go into some of these tents and see what they've got."

They went into one tent after another. They saw Amora, the Mystic Mind Reader, but didn't think much of her. "That's an old trick" scoffed day. "I could do that when I was nine years old." They saw Hercules Junior who was a chubby weight-lifter in a Leopard skin and knee-high sandals. They saw Dagmar, the Sword Swallow, and she was wonderful and she ums

the game woman whom Garnet and Citronella had seen darning socks earlier in the day. They saw the Jewel Girls and Bruno, who were also perfect, and they listened to the orchestra of Hank Hazzard and his Hayseeds. "My eardrums feel black and blue," Jay said afterwards.

By that time it was getting dark and they went to gather their party together for supper. They had some difficulty in locating Mrs. Hauser, but finally found her at the shooting gallery taking aim at a teacup with one eye closed. They watched her demolish a whole row of teacups and some small statues, and receive with dignity the prize, which was an oil painting of an Indian girl in a canoe. It had a frame made of real birch bark.

"Grandma Eberhardt will love this," said Mrs. Hauser. "She remembers Indians in Esau's Valley, and she's real fond of pictures anyway."

They all had supper together at a counter. It was Garnet's own party, and everyone had a good time. As they ate, the Great Zorander walked along his tightrope above the fair ground; a spotlight followed him and made his spangles glitter. He seemed a radiant and enchanted being as he moved with accurate grace so far above their heads.

Afterwards Garnet went to say good-bye to Timmy. The shed was full of flickering light and shadow cast by the oil lamps hung from the ceiling. Timmy staggered to his feet and sniffed at the palm of her hand. But there was nothing in it for him so he lay down again.

"Good night, Timmy," said Garnet. "In three days I will come and take you home."

Driving away in Mr. Freebody's truck Garnet turned and Looked out of the window. The Ferris wheel was

a ring of light, and all the tents were lanterns full of light. Among the dark, surrounding fields, the whole magical and temporary world of the fair glowed Like phosphorus on a dark sea.

Citronella yawned.

"I don't think I'm going to want an ice-cream cone for a long, long time," she said.

X. The Silver Thimble

IT WAS a good thing that Eric had taught her to do handsprings and flip-ups, Garnet decided. It was very handy to know how to do one or two when you felt happy. Better than jumping. Better than yelling.

She went out of doors and did a few; then she remembered something that she had forgotten and went back in the house and up to her room. She rummaged first in a bureau drawer and then in her pocketbook, and took out the silver thimble. She rubbed it up and down, up and down, on the front of her Jersey till it had a good shine. Then she put it in the pocket of her Miler pants and went downstairs again.

Eric and Jay were nailing shingles on the roof of the barn. Except for the painting it was all finished, and very fine it looked.

There was a ladder leaning against it and Garnet scampered up and climbed onto the roof. Her bare soles clung to the shingles as she crawled up to the ridgepole where Jay and Eric were balanced like two crows.

"Hello." she said.

"You can help us nail shingles," said Jay handing her an extra hammer, She squatted down beside them, but she didn't do much work; she kept lifting her head to look about. Below was their own barnyard, with